

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 15 and 18 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2 and 15 have been amended, claims 3-8 and 17 have been canceled and claim 18 has been added.

The specification was objected to based on an informality. By this Amendment, the specification has been amended responsive to the objection. It is respectfully requested that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Yanagihara et al. (hereinafter "Yanagihara"), U.S. Patent No. 5,558,689.

Applicant assumes that the rejection also applies to claims 7, 8, 15 and 17 based on the Examiner's comments. The rejection of claims 1, 2, 15 and 18 is respectfully traversed.

Yanagihara first fails to disclose or suggest a three-dimensional non-woven fabric with at least one line-shaped member that is mounted on at least two ridges as recited in claim 1 and as similarly recited in claim 15 and new claim 18.

Yanagihara discloses, in Figs. 25-29, a filter plate 250 with adjacent ridges 211 interconnected by a plurality of connectors 220 (col. 15, lines 40-42). To produce the filter plate 250, fibers of polymeric materials are carded and needle punched to form a nonwoven fabric having a predetermined fiber density, which is then thermally cured as compressed in a press having a corrugated surface profile capable of forming connectors 220 (col. 15, lines 44-50).

By using a press, the filter plate 250 only includes the ridges 211, connectors 220 (with a flat portion 221 and a pair of slopes 222, 223) and flanges 216. Yanagihara thus fails to disclose or suggest any other structure that is included with the filter plate 250. In particular Yanagihara fails to disclose or suggest at least one line-shaped member that is mounted on at least two ridges 211. Yanagihara fails to disclose Applicant's at least one line-shaped member because Yanagihara fails to mount a separate element onto the ridges 211.

Logically, Yanagihara also fails to disclose Applicant's at least one second portion with semi-molten fibers hanging down from the at least one line-shaped member. As discussed, Yanagihara fails to disclose Applicant's at least one line-shaped member. As such, Yanagihara fails to disclose or suggest semi-molten fibers that hang down from the at least one line-shaped member.

Applicant asserts that Yanagihara's connectors 220 does not correspond to Applicant's at least one line-shaped member. As claimed, the at least one second portion is formed by spinning semi-molten fibers onto the at least one line-shaped member. As such, the at least one line-shaped member is used as an element for manufacturing and remains a part of the structure of the three-dimensional non-woven fabric after manufacturing. Yanagihara fails to maintain any element that was used for manufacturing and thus fails to disclose or suggest Applicant's at least one line-shaped member or hanging fiber wall.

Accordingly, Yanagihara fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in Applicant's claims 1 and 15, or new claim 18, as well as the additional features cited in Applicant's claim 2. It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 2, 15 and 18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Scott M. Schulte
Registration No. 44,325

JAO:SMS/sxb

Date: April 22, 2004

OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

<p>DEPOSIT ACCOUNT USE AUTHORIZATION Please grant any extension necessary for entry; Charge any fee due to our Deposit Account No. 15-0461</p>
--